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Looking at dams in a new light

Federal agencies team up to find energy savings

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Bonneville Power Administration

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PORTLAND, Ore. – Three federal agencies in the Northwest have launched a joint effort that could save enough energy to meet the annual electrical demands of as many as 2,400 households. The Bonneville Power Administration, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have teamed up to install energy efficient lighting and other systems at the 31 hydroelectric dams that make up the Federal Columbia River Power System. The joint venture is part of an overall energy strategy of federal facilities aimed at securing as much energy savings as possible.

"Lighting upgrades produce immediate savings at a very low cost, as many homeowners know," said Rick Miller, a BPA Energy Efficiency program manager. For example, BPA and Reclamation recently completed a lighting retrofit at Hungry Horse Dam near Kalispell, Mont., replacing about 1,200 incandescent lights with compact fluorescent lamps controlled by timers and occupancy sensors. The project cost approximately \$64,000 and will save 1.45 million kilowatt-hours, or enough energy to power 170 homes for a year.

Based on audit results at other power plants in the system, the agencies believe the potential savings at McNary and Bonneville dams on the lower Columbia River will power 640 homes for a year. Taking similar measures at Grand Coulee Dam would supply the annual power needs of another 540 homes.

Additional cost-effective water and energy conservation actions at 130 state and federal fish hatcheries, many adjacent to the dams, are also being explored.

The Bush administration recently called upon federal agencies to set an example for the rest of the nation by reducing energy consumption.

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